

BoKAAP to BoKAROO

CHRIS
MURPHY



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Cover:
Self-portrait with stone
sheds which line what was
the old road linking the
Cape to the west coast.



BoKAAP TO BoKAROO

bo (*Afrikaans*) above, up, upper, beyond.

Kaap (*Afrikaans*) the Cape, as in the Cape of Good Hope, Western Cape, South Africa.

Karoo (*Afrikaans*, presumed derived from *Khoekhoen*, **garo**) the barren, dry, harsh central plateau of the country; sparsely populated.

The **Bokaap** is a locality of central Cape Town, originally settled by slaves brought to the land. Many were craftsmen who added to the developing colony with their skills. In the eras of division that ensued the area became classified for occupation by people of colour only. Today it is a vibrant part of the city, albeit under pressure from developers.

The **[Bo]Karoo** is the semi-desert region making up the central region. It endures extremes of heat and cold and due to lack of water was not readily settled. Despite the severity of climate the San occupied it for millennia and the Khoekhoe passed through on their slow migration from central Southern Africa to what is now the Cape. It does, however, display archaeological evidence of prehistoric life and contains substantial fossil deposits.



The **BoKaap** is the beginning of my journey through the vernacular of the Western, Northern and Eastern Cape, with a few diversions along the way.

Usually portrayed by the now vibrantly coloured buildings lining the streets, some have managed to escape this veneer, but have not avoided the 'modernisation' so evident en route.

BoKaap to BoKaroo is inspired by my abiding love of heritage structures and the environment in which they exist, specifically what could be termed basic vernacular. This is people building from the ground up, sometimes without knowledge of plans or architectural practices, utilising materials readily available near the sites. The buildings speak a language devoid of pretensions, that would illustrate and boast to one's neighbours of success measured by the scale and flamboyance of the structures. Instead, these speak of achievement through trials and tribulations, of establishing a home or building with a social or community function. Some of my photographs show grander ambitions, train stations or industrial buildings that no longer fulfil their original intention, but they too were never of majestic scales: functional and aesthetically simple. But I have to admit to straying from this principle when trying to depict the varying styles I encountered on my travels. Please bear with me.

*Elliott seems to have been determined to record as much as he was able of the old farmhouses, buildings and streets that were already rapidly disappearing with the ever-growing pressure to modernise.

This project, like most of my work within heritage, has essentially been inspired by two photographers and an architect, without whom we would not have some of the references that are now so essential in conservation circles. Elliott's apparent reason to document has not in any way altered in the 21st century*.

Thomas Daniel Ravenscroft

1851 (Swellendam) - 1948 (Hermanus)

He started taking photographs in the late 1800s. In the first decade of the 20th century he was commissioned to take pictures in South Africa and Rhodesia. He later opened a studio in Van Riebeeck Street, Malmesbury before moving to Hermanuspieterusfontein (Hermanus) in the 1930s, where he spent the remainder of his life.



Arthur Elliott

1870 (New York) - 1938 (Cape Town)

He left a legacy of some 10,000 photographs of the early 20th century Cape. Orphaned at the age of 12 he relocated to Scotland, then at 20 left for South Africa. He arrived in Cape Town from Johannesburg in 1900 as a war refugee, and lived at 134 Long Street. Elliott held major exhibitions in 1910, 1913, 1926, 1930 and 1938, which enabled him to make a living through sales.



Gabriel Fagan

1925 (Cape Town)

Whilst employed as an architect by Volkskas during the 1950s he flew extensively over rural South Africa documenting many buildings and intrinsically creating a record, later published as a book called **Brakdak**. In essence he created another fundamental archive of vernacular styles.



Dedication. Producing a volume such as this is takes time, effort, and of course finance. The latter has been singularly difficult, no impossible, to obtain. Support from heritage and/or art structures has not been readily forthcoming.

I intrinsically believe that this form of architectural heritage in South Africa is under dire threat, through ignorance, wilful neglect or outright conflict with the law in place to protect it – The National Heritage Resources Act (1999).

Thank you. 205DPI online magazine for publishing .

Support. My backbone, therefore, has been my partner Karin.

Of necessity this project cannot encompass every site that I found intriguing or of special interest. It would have been wonderful to make it far more inclusive but that then would have created a document or series of volumes many thousands of pages long.

Some subject matter, such as churches and mills, have largely been covered in other publications, so to a large degree have not been included in **BoKaap to BoKaroo**.

I hope that I have managed to portray an aspect of the vernacular that is so much of the essence of the country, mostly the Western Cape but also the neighbouring provinces.



When photographed in 2012 this Bokaap structure with its perfect Georgian proportions was in a perilous state, defaced by graffiti, stripped of pride. It has subsequently been restored.

Would this be considered patina?
Certainly the colours and textures reveal
levels of the history of this old lady.





The building seen on the left in a more contextual situation. The radically cleaned up structures and the modern attachments, aerial, air conditioner, window blinds and electrical connection stand in contrast to the deteriorating texture of the old lady.





The Bokaap, despite being an area of immense heritage value, both architecturally and culturally, is not always well preserved. These examples depict building methodologies more than well conserved examples.



Bokaap : Rows of brightly decorated houses are now symbolic of the Bokaap. One wonders what the original builders and inhabitants would have made of this?



City Bowl : Bree Street in the City has become the focus of trendy expansion; old flat-roofed dwellings have been converted into contemporary businesses, a new lease of life an established area. It is a welcome change from the demolition and expansion policy so often prevalent.



City Bowl : Adapted for contemporary use, some of the Bree Street façades still retain memories of earlier functions.



Gardens : Wilkinson Street contains a number of cottages in similar style, dating from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The street carries the name of the developer responsible for this expansion.



Gardens : Context is often difficult in modern recording; the tomb of Baron William Ferdinand van Rheede van Oudtshoorn (d1822) and his two wives is situated in what now feels like a totally inappropriate location. In its time it was on the land named Saasveld, the building demolished in the 1950s and a replica constructed in Franschhoek.



Vredehoek : This inner city suburb developed rapidly through the Art Deco period, leaving substantial evidence of this style, mostly as blocks of flats. Very few have not been modernised, but many retain the classic proportions and detail.





Observatory : Containing a rich collection of Victorian and Edwardian styles, Observatory benefited from the reach of the Cape Town Railway, bringing the suburb within easy and quick access of the city.





Observatory : The Bijou, victim of a fire many years ago, still retains its outer Art Deco motifs and interesting chamfered corner. The residue of the building is still utilised.





Mowbray : A Herbert Baker creation, Welgelegen sits on the slopes of Devil's Peak, which creates an imposing backdrop.





Newlands : Josephine Mill, named after Crown Princess Josephine of Sweden and built in 1840.



Wynberg : Chelsea Village





Old Wynberg Village : Corner turreted shop,
once Atwell's Bakery.



Tokai : An example of a basic, corrugated structure that has survived the rapid urban development of this area.





Robben Island : The Old Parsonage and Residency on Robben Island, two stone-built structures standing alongside, both with simple wood verandas.



Philadelphia : Early 20th century mill, constructed with corrugated iron. In the latter part of its story it was purchased by Pieter van der Westhuizen; today it is a restaurant and wedding/conference centre, still housing some of his work.



Philadelphia : Still utilised as a post office, this altered building with two straight gables, dated 1904 and 1914.



Kalbaskraal : Taking its cue from other rather trendy 'on Main' concepts, this store provides basic commodities to the community in the village.



Kalbaskraal : Simple vernacular, gabled and dated 1922.



Chatsworth : A primitive house, with extensions, lurks alongside the rail tracks.





Mamre : Possibly originating in the early 18th century, this *langhuis* is still a functional structure.



Mamre : A well maintained simple cottage provides a scene in the village that seems to be little changed over time.



Near Darling : Once an inn and shop, Commercialdale stands alongside the Mamre-Darling Road.



Near Darling: A group of *volkshuisies* line what was the old road in the direction of Malmesbury.





Darling : The town hall in its previous incarnation, now a museum.



Malmesbury : Thiart House, a house that truly represents the concept of design from a catalogue, a kit in other words. A very fine example of its type.



Malmesbury : Andrew's Hope is a magnificent Victorian house standing back from an equally superb wild figus.



Malmesbury : The old Freemasons' Lodge with its somewhat classical appearance, dating from just after mid-19th century.





Malmesbury : The suburb of Wesbank was a purpose-built separate racial development early in the 20th century. Most of the buildings have been enlarged and modified, as this one.



Malmesbury : An unusually shaped structure located on a sharp corner, showing creative use of space.



Malmesbury : Just before the 20th boom in mass produced housing there was still just enough time to design with an eclectic flair.



Malmesbury : Surviving on one of the original arterial routes for the town.



Malmesbury : Snugly fitting a junction on one of the old routes into town.



Paardeberg : A neat little gabled cottage ensconced amongst the vineyards.





Paarl : A Provincial Heritage Site, shaded on the main road.



Somerset West : Semi-detached residence with matching gables and spacing.





Porseleinberg : Brakfontein, with its simple gable.



Riebeek West : Allesverloren, originally a three-roomed long house it evolved via a 'T' to the present 'H' shape and today depicts its Victorian appearance.





Riebeek West : Ongegund, on the farm *Bovenplaats*, the birthplace of JC Smuts is a very evocative, simple 19th century dwelling.



Riebeeck Valley : Sonquasdrift, as the name describes, a river crossing for the Sonqua, has some of the best preserved buildings of the Cape Dutch epoch.



Berg River (Porseleinberg) : A lime deposit in the vicinity created the necessity of this kiln. At one stage the end product was transported by a rail system across the Berg River, then taken to Hermon for further distribution.



Wellington : On the outskirts of town this gem stands in the fields.





Hermon : A substantial corrugated iron construction, with the outbuildings in the same material.



Hermon : A one-time Dutch Reformed mission station, part of the Wellington congregation. Now renovated the complex has lost some of its original materials and consequently form.



Berg River area, near Hermon : This rustic barn is part of the *werf* that makes up Eikeboom. The walls struggling to stay vertical tell of a long and hard life.



Berg River, near Hermon : Klipriftskraal. The low-key opulence of this house is in direct contrast to the nearby mission buildings.



Heron/Gouda : One of the line of blockhouse that follow the rail line, this one becoming a nursery.



Gouda : Across the railway line, another example of a village with ambitions. On the main route to Johannesburg a large amount of traffic would have at one time passed by this little junction.



Gouda : A row of what once would have been identical houses line a small street in the village, perhaps from a time when a developer envisaged potential growth.



Gouda : The hotel, rather brutally extended. Some interior fixtures indicate an older building, belying the present exterior.





Bridgetown : At one stage an hotel, stable, shop, boarding house and school existed here, a village in the making.



Bridgetown : Or Vledermusdrift, on the Berg River. A failed venture to establish a town on the route north has resulted in a few scattered structures.



Swartland : On a back road between Moorreesburg and Malmesbury this barn still serves its original function.



Moorreesburg : Once the Carnegie Library, sponsored by a Scottish born American industrialist, after whom it is named. The more modern Dutch Reformed Church spire pokes above the rooftop.



Moorreesburg : The Tiger Oats Complex, birthplace of South African icon, Jungle Oats, is a forlorn relic of its glory days. It is, however, a rare and fine example of industrial architecture in the country.



Koringberg : The well proportioned old mill, somewhat reminiscent of a scene from a French village.





Yzerfontein : One of two lime kilns on the road into the town, once used to burn mussel shells sourced nearby, and the lime reputedly an ingredient in the construction of many structures in the area.



Paternoster : Named after the barque Columbine which was wrecked there on 31 May 1829, the lighthouse was commissioned more than a century later.



Steenberg's Cove, St Helena bay : Some of the surviving fishermen's cottages, left over from the once thriving industry.



Steenberg's Cove : Some of the structures in this poverty stricken community are in very poor states, only just providing refuges.





Berg River Estuary : Across from Velddrif, this simple little structure with evidence of bricks containing seashells; locally sourced material being of the essence.



Velddrif, Sandveld : Struggling with the elements of this harsh environment, this old *langhuis* still provides a home.



Laaiplek : The pure simplicity of line in this building, broken only by necessary extensions, describes the basic lifestyle of west coast living.



Elands Bay : Remnants of the World War II radar station that provided security on the coastline during the conflict.



Heerenlogement : This very primitive construction is located near the famous stop on the old route north.



Near Elands Bay : An old barn on Vensterklip with most of the plaster off, displays different materials and styles of construction, telling of its alterations over time.





Leipoldtville : Scattered, decomposing buildings litter the end of the village, remnants of a more flourishing time.



Het Kruis : A loose group of occupied buildings lie around the rail junction; north of Piketberg, this obviously was a stop of some relevance.





Redelinghuys : A very unusually proportioned, double-storey dwelling, accompanied by a thatched outbuilding, not complimentary in style.



Aurora : Steep steps guide one to the loft of this long house on the outskirts of the small village.





Goedverwacht : Not many of the cottages in the village retain their original features, including sash windows and thatched roofs; despite additions this one retains some evidence of its early state.



Goedverwacht : One of the simple houses making up this mission station.



Berg River : Kersefontein, one of the finer farm complexes. Not modernised nor over maintained, the atmosphere of a complex far from the Cape is retained.



Berg River south : A rickety barn converted for use as a store or perhaps garage.
The door gaps appear wide enough to allow access for wagons.





Berg River : On part of the waterworks complex is this old barn, which undoubtedly pre-dates the later function. Also on site are military barracks, utilised for training during World War II.



Berg River : At one stage a water processing plant stood here, the empty dams are still evident, and workers resided in a row of houses. The water was required for Saldanha Bay and the mining operation that is now the West Coast Fossil Park.



Moravia : One of a row of houses at the rail junction.



Sandveld : A farm deep in the area, seemingly removed from the modern era.





Hopefield : A simple home in the town with a central 'A' gable and enclosed *stoepkamer* on one end.



Hopefield : A *rietmuurhuis* reconstructed in traditional method and materials, as a remembrance of those demolished in nearby Oudekraalfontein to make way for more modern accommodation.





Hopefield : A simple barn on one of the properties lining the Soutrivier.



Hopefield : A double-storey building in the main street, at one stage a shop.





Hopefield : A magnificent example of Victorian/Edwardian style in the main street.



Koperfontein : One of the structures lining what was the main road to Hopefield.



Koperfontein : This really is a shop – ring the bell on the gate, you enter and the window is opened to serve you. An excellent example of a small, intact corrugated iron structure. Still functional.



Hopefield District : A very basic barn with small window inserts, a small dam covered with corrugated iron – useful attributes in an area with high temperatures and a severe wind factor in summer.



Saron : Simple, basic structures form the core of the old part of the mission town.



Saron : The homestead De Leeuwenklip, original structure on the farm that became the mission town.





Matjiesrivier : A farm that takes its name from a nearby river, deep in the heart of the Swartland. A substantial complex, now stripped and neglected.



Porterville : The old *bioscope* retains its rather dramatic, high frontage.



Porterville : A house that could be described as very well lived in; every available space is utilised with various materials.



Porterville : A residence where diamonds are the dominant theme shape.



Porterville : Prison, court house, municipal offices and prison, this is now the Jan Danckaert Museum.



Swartland Plain : The farm Rhenosterfontein, although crumbling, still retains its tall palm trees, and a name indicative of the fauna once endemic here.





Piketberg : A multitude of styles adorn this row of structures, from Georgian proportions to mid 20th century, a sense of layering evident.



Piketberg : An unusually heavy balance, where it seems the rooms took priority over the space allocated for the *stoep*.



Piket-bo-Berg : A stone-built, thatched cottage located on the mountain above the town of Piketberg, appropriately named.



Halfmanshof on the Vier-en-Twintig-Riviere : Serving as a general store at the 'heart' of this small settlement.





Citrusdal : A double-storey Victorian building makes up part of the conglomerate at The Baths.



Cederberg : A collapsing farmhouse serves to illustrate different materials utilised in its construction.



Cederberg : The mill on the farm Dwarsrivier.



Clanwilliam : The old gaol is now the town museum.





Agter Cederberg : Located just over the Pakhuis Pass is a farm of the same name; stunningly situated beneath the high mountain range.



Agter Cederberg : Primitive mud and reed houses, overlaid with corrugated iron;
a lifestyle far removed from that of the 21st century.



Agter Cederberg : Still functioning as a residence, the surroundings might go some way to describe the hardships of surviving in this environment.



Biedouw Valley : Biedouw, a farm surrounded by a *werfmuur*, stands at a junction that connects Clanwilliam, Wupperthal and the Tankwa Karoo; it must have been an isolated, lonely place before modern connectivity.



Wuppertal : Most of the houses have been modernised and it is difficult to find even one with some of its original features, like thatch and wooden framed windows.



Wuppertal : A ribbon of structures follows the curve in the landscape, still with the character of the mission village deep in the mountains.



Calvinia : Mrs Dolla Parker's Shop, still conducting business apparently, under the guidance of WH Parker.



Calvinia : The veranda wraps cosily around this interestingly shaped house.





Calvinia : Five Roses, an iconic brand, draws attention to the corner shop.



Calvinia : On the outskirts, on the road leading north, a farm complex beneath a *koppie* indicative that one is in the Karoo.





Calvinia : This house shows a lack of maintenance but still retains some of its original elements.



Nieuwoudtville : A basic cottage, with additions assumed to have been added as extra space became necessary.



Near Nieuwoudtville : On Papkuilsfontein, this stone cottage near the Oorlogskloof, redolent with the reason it was so named.



Nieuwoudtville : Corner property shrouded in vegetation.





Kuruman : Part of the Moffat Mission Station complex, a feeling that time has come to a halt.



Kuruman : Well-maintained stone structure; a feeling that Mr Moffat could make an appearance at any moment.



Strydenburg : A very interestingly proportioned structure, complete with parapet down one side.



Strydenburg : A Provincial Heritage site, this wonderfully proportioned and adorned house could do with some attention.



Loxton : 1900, simple stone construction.



Williston : A cottage with a steeply pitched roof.





Victoria West : The Apollo theatre with its dramatic Art Deco facade.



Victoria West : A pair of lovingly maintained cottages.



Near Carnarvon : The design of corbelled houses can be traced back to early origins in Europe. Their construction in remote spheres of the country were matters of necessity – lack of building materials other than stone.



Carnarvon : A lived-in patina, shutters a little off true alignment and a small decorative motif above the front door creates charm.





Sutherland : The harsh climate has undoubtedly contributed to the weathered features of this stone, flat-roofed cottage.



Sutherland : A simple house extended on one side with a flat-roofed addition.





Vosburg : A charmingly erratic structure



Vosburg : A well preserved residence with its own local version of the old National Monument plaque.



Richmond : A structure with a rich patina.



Richmond : A low parapet wall forming the boundary onto the pavement.





Richmond : Gable fronting the *stoep* to this balanced little cottage.



Hanover : A new, wooden construction adding to the interesting townscape.



Colesburg : Potted plants add to the charm of this cottage.



Beaufort West : A rather weathered home in the mid Karoo.





Matjiesfontein : The impressive Lord Milner Hotel.



Matjiesfontein : The old post office still in impeccable condition.



Prince Albert : A Karoo town that boasts a fair sample of well-preserved older structures, contributing much to its atmosphere.



Prince Albert : A fully functioning building and *stoep*, with a large display of memorabilia for sale.





Karoopoort : At the gateway between the Warm Bokkeveld and the Ceres Karoo the farm complex provides a beacon.



Warm Bokkeveld : Uitkomst, part of a farm occupied from the early 18th century in this still remote place.





Stormsvlei : The old post office.



Hermanus Lagoon : A little twin-chimneyed cottage surrounded by trees and close to the shore of the lagoon. A quiet, reclusive spot.



Stanford : The Anglican church and outbuilding, all stone built.



Stanford : Charming little back street cottage.





Near Stanford : Modernised but certainly still with charm; two dormer windows poke from below the thatched roof.



Near Stanford : Small dwelling in the Overberg, slowly collapsing.





Port Beaufort : A storehouse for the firm Barry & Nephews from the mid-19th century, when they were important contributors to the economy of the area.



Malgas : Another store for Barry & Nephews from the mid-19th century, this structure was probably part of the farm that pre-dates this period.





Vermaaklikheid : A lone cottage slowly being eroded by the elements.



Vermaaklikheid : Scattered cottages contribute to the rural atmosphere of this small village near the south coast.



Vermaaklikheid : A farmhouse situated in one of the valleys that make up this sprawling hamlet.



Vermaaklikheid : Trading Post and Restaurant for sale.





Bot River : This wonderfully adapted corrugated iron shed now houses a restaurant.



Near Puntjie : This fine 18th century house stands on the banks of the Duivenhoks River in the south Cape.





Near Still Bay : A deserted farmhouse loiters next to the road.



Genadendal : Part of the mission centre with signs of Germanic influences.



Genadendal : A row of cottages nestling in one of the lanes.



Greyton : Weltevreden, assumed to be the original house on the farm from which the village originated.



Greytoun : The Post House, with corner entrance and windows beneath the eaves, much as one might expect to find in England.



Vondeling : The deteriorating railway buildings at a station many kilometres from any formal settlement, suggesting a time when the Karoo was better connected to the outside world.





Willowmore : Located in the 'CBD' of the town this well proportioned double-storey building is a retail and restaurant complex.



Willowmore : Every town had a Royal Hotel (apparently) – this one still functioning.



Willowmore : A most interesting facade to this building.



The Tankwa Karoo : Archetypal landscape inhabited by a lone structure. A wind pump describes the water source in such a barren region.



Klaarstroom : Idyllically placed against the Swartberg, the village is the last stop before crossing to the south.



Knysna Forest: A remnant of the days when miners lived in the area.



Karatara : A forestry village high in the hills north east of Knysna; this is the main retail outlet.



Oudtshoorn : Squashed between two other buildings, this little house struggles to survive in the centre of town.





Prince Albert Pass : A little dwelling lurking in the midst of the pass.



Krakeel : A stone house with gable in the Langkloof.



Twee Riviere : A gorgeous mix of plastered facade and gable intermixed with stonework with highlighted window and door surrounds.



Twee Riviere : An archetypal village scenario – old rustic barn, its end reflected in a dam alongside.





Twee Riviere : The old school building.



Twee Riviere : A stone outbuilding with very wide door and interesting brick layer above, still utilised as a kitchen.





The Langkloof : A remote valley off the Langkloof, littered with structures that tell of a time when more prosperous and lived in.



The Langkloof : A row of buildings, simple, but resonant of the lives once here.



The Langkloof : The old school high in the valley, before children relocated to the closest town, Joubertina.



The Langkloof : The simplest vernacular style; basic and functional in this remote environment.



The Langkloof : *A langhuis nestles in a kloof.*

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south coast

karoo

east cape



BoKaap to BoKaroo Prologue

I cannot deny my fascination for structures located in the various situations in South Africa. Much of the time I question what they represent. How and why anyone would have wanted to live in certain circumstances: heat, cold, pests, lack of water, isolation. Maybe the city was a bit more conducive. The small hamlets that sprung up would have offered some relief from the distance scenario.

When I studied photography at Ruth Prowse School of Art under Ray Ryan, he loved to drag us out at dawn to photograph structures, mostly Cape Dutch vernacular. The light had to be right, creating form. He instilled in me the need to look at the subject, express what I saw and felt. It has stayed with me for a lifetime.

I have only attached simple descriptions to each photograph, preferring to let the images of the structures speak for themselves.

This collection is only the start of the journey I am making. I look forward to continuing the trip.

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Photography © **Chris Murphy**

